

MEETING SUMMARY

**TRANS-LAKE WASHINGTON PROJECT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
OVERLAKE HOSPITAL CONFERENCE CENTER OFFSITE ANNEX, BELLEVUE, WA
JUNE 18, 2001 — 2:00 – 5:00 P.M.**

INTRODUCTION, WELCOME, AND AGENDA REVIEW

Pat Serie, EnviroIssues, opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussion about the multi-modal analysis results, conclusions, and remaining questions. The committee would not be asked for recommendations to the Executive Committee regarding the multi-modal alternatives to take into the EIS. No changes were made to the agenda.

Pat Serie recapped the last all-committee meeting on June 13, 2001, stating that there was much discussion about the remaining questions and a revised schedule. The team had agreed to return to the committees to continue to make sense of the data, and answer remaining questions.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Philip Grega, Seattle, commented on HCT on I-90 and the potential disruption by converting the center lanes to light rail. He stated that the committee should not lose sight of the commitment to Henderson St.

MULTI-MODAL ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION – DISCUSSION

Jeff Peacock, Parametrix, reviewed the conclusions presented at the June 13, 2001, committee workshop, noting the key points from each of the 4-, 6-, and 8-lane alternatives. He reiterated that the team felt the 4- and 6-lane alternatives should be evaluated in the EIS. He also reviewed the 8-lane alternative conclusions, and restated the resulting questions regarding those alternatives.

Discussion and questions are summarized below.

- A message distributed from Jim Leonard, FHWA, stated that FHWA would need to evaluate any increased volumes that would affect the interstate highway system, including I-405 and I-5. There could be significant issues if such volumes degrade performance on either of those facilities.

- It was clarified that capacity constraints with BRT/HOV become problematic over time in the downtown Seattle area, and become more severe after 2020. Portland had recognized that significant differences exist when looking beyond the normal 20-30 year planning horizon, and that 40-50 years out will influence the types of decisions being made. Constraints of the BRT system result from buses mixing with traffic, and from activity centers where buses congregate.
- Concern was also voiced about looking beyond 20-30 years, since forecasts for growth in specific geographical areas within the region are not reliable; there are many variables that will be affected by and affect growth, including energy use and gentrification.
- If the LINK light rail moves to South Lake Union route, more bus capacity will be necessary in downtown Seattle to serve LINK access from Capitol and First Hills.
- A north HCT corridor was originally suggested because the potential ridership and capacity could then serve the eastside and south side. Ron Sheck's idea for a dual routing concept off the SR 520 corridor into downtown Seattle hasn't been examined yet.
- HCT ridership was modeled based on an extensive feeder bus system, with no assumptions about parking and access at stations. It was suggested that the impact of stations on arterials may be significant, and there may be a way to encourage transit access to stations.
- It was suggested that renderings of interchanges and intersections be created, including at the I-405 interchange. Jeff Peacock stated that such a rendering of the I-405 interchange would be so far away that details would not be decipherable.
- There was discussion about the possibility of light rail in the center lanes of I-90, whether it would be possible without an aggressive TDM package, and whether it would result in full displacement of the traffic from the center lanes. The original I-90 agreement called for light rail and one reversible HOV lane.
- It was noted that TDM still seems to be an add-on at the end of the process, which is a real concern to some committee members.
- It was suggested that it might be premature to assume that the I-405 PPA will be the adopted proposal, as there are many reasons that it could change before a ROD.
- Assumptions for changes to the arterial system are modest, based on the MTP. The Destination 2030 study points to arterials that have never been built, resulting in local trips that make use of the state freeway system. It was suggested that other new arterials be considered to develop a local network to accommodate a system of bus ways and local traffic.
- A balance is needed between providing more and easier access to the freeway, and preventing conflicting movements through closely spaced intersections, such as 108th and

124th. The local traffic impacts of closing some of the intersections create serious issues at Lake Washington Blvd. and Bellevue Way.

- Population and growth estimates have been provided by the local jurisdictions. Changing growth assumptions is beyond the scope of WSDOT's work.
- It was suggested that the HOV lane is necessary to complete the regional HOV system, and that it is also necessary to have an additional GP lane to start to accommodate the growing population.
- It was also suggested that an Eastlake tunnel option is the only realistic option for not adding traffic to I-5.
- It was suggested that no American city has the same level of outbound reverse commute travel as exists in the Seattle-Redmond corridor, and none have the level of mode choice that exists for inbound Seattle travel. Depending on measures of success, other regions have been able to deal with a similar traffic pattern. Higher density growth will foster higher levels of transit usage, but the project cannot dictate density levels to the jurisdictions.
- There was concern raised about the perception of the percentage increases in vehicle volume under the 6-lane alternatives. Jeff Peacock stated that the team was surprised at the relatively low increase in person throughput. John Perlic, Parametrix, reminded the committee that HOV lanes carry capacity up to the bridge, and the comparison is made against the no action scenario. A 4-6% increase in real numbers does represent a large number of people.
- Person throughput in the 8-lane scenario was gauged assuming free flow in all traffic lanes, which implies that all of the questionable areas can be fixed.
- Assumptions about induced demand on an expanded facility are included in the PSRC forecasting model.
- The regional model is continually updated, but does not include information from the Trans-Lake Washington Study regarding the origin-destination (O-D) survey since it did not represent statistically valid numbers.
- It was suggested that a \$3 billion investment in a 6-lane highway would not give the movement increases that the public would expect from that investment. Jeff Peacock stated that it would be a value judgment that the committees will need to make, looking longer than a 20-year horizon.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS - DISCUSSION

Lorie Parker, CH2M Hill, reviewed the environmental impacts briefly, and fielded questions regarding the impacts and environmental ratings. She stated that the west side calculations for acres of impact were reviewed, and that they were accurate. A 6-lane facility already widens

itself into the wetland areas, and the 8-lane facility would have a relatively small increase in the affected acres. She also stated that private open space would be discussed with local jurisdictions, but that they will not be treated legally as a 4(f) issue. The open space negotiated for perpetuity in Redmond was an example.

Questions and discussion is summarized below.

- Jim Reckers again asked for a quantification of the impacts in terms of the numbers of affected specimens, as a way to determine the severity of the impact. Lorie Parker stated that it is difficult to do unless the numbers are very small, and that ESA-listed species may not be subject to any takes.
- “Low feasibility of mitigation” means that it will be difficult to replace impacted areas in kind, such as within Foster Island.
- Would the UW Triangle Parking Garage need to be replaced, if a tunnel to Pacific St. is completed?
- The environmental analysis did not include ‘credit’ for removing existing bridges/viaducts and/or changing operating procedures such as runoff. The impacts to Foster Island have been overestimated, as if the highway was set on the ground. It is likely that a structure would rest on piers. Construction impacts have not been determined.
- Displacement ratings were based on displacement of structures, and do not include land-use and parks criteria.
- Double decking the freeway in the Foster Island area, for example, would reduce impacts of the footprint and therefore natural environment, but built environment impacts such as visual and noise will be greater.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is looking at reconstructing meanders in the lower part of Bear Creek. It is likely that the agencies will be coordinating the impacts that are not avoidable.

COSTS

Discussion and questions about costs is summarized below.

- Since large lids are expensive, would it be possible to consider more realistic alternatives such as enhanced sound walls that are effective beyond required mitigation? Jeff Peacock stated that the issue of noise wall height is site specific. Cost estimates have included noise walls for 90% of the corridor. Taller walls may reach a point of diminishing returns, and would have to be looked at on a site-specific basis.
- A matrix of costs to demonstrate maximum and minimum cost estimates was requested.

- The HCT alignments on the west side of the lake used for analysis would be revisited in a project specific EIS to build the HCT lines. Don Billen, Sound Transit, stated that there are opportunities to phase construction, and eventually serve additional riders. It was noted that campus transit routes would need to be replaced if moved for station siting, and growing business opportunities exist to the west of the University District on 45th.

NEXT STEPS

The Executive Committee will be briefed about the discussion in the Advisory and Technical Committees concerning issues and timing on June 27, 2001. The following points were made toward the conclusion of the meeting.

- The smallest footprint possible should be pursued, with no more GP lanes. HCT and HOV lanes should be emphasized.
- The schedule should be pushed back; lane equivalencies in a regional system should be described; mitigation measures should be laid out in detail; and HCT technology options beyond light rail should be explored further.
- Eastlake supports alternatives 1 and 2; noise has not been addressed for that community; impacts to reduce traffic in that area and provide better interchanges should be examined.
- Concern was expressed that HCT will be dropped from the SR 520 corridor because of decisions on I-90 or other areas. An HCT option should be retained for a future route, by including engineering and right-of-way costs in this project. The projected life of such a system will be beyond the planning horizon for this project.
- Looking at the long term, BRT has a limited shelf life not beyond the planning horizon, and should be an interim solution at best. Alternatives 7 and 8 should not be studied further in terms of changes to the highway.
- HCT options should be preserved in the SR 520 corridor.
- 6 lanes is as wide a facility as can be tolerated in terms of effectiveness, impacts, and costs.
- Unless the staff can show a greater reduction in congestion under an 8-lane alternative given the cost and political opposition, it is not likely to be realistic. There was agreement noted that the HCT option should be preserved, but practically think that BRT is the future for the region, especially on the east side.
- Extra time can be spent to figure out remaining questions, but more information is not needed unless it relates to reducing congestion problems.
- The HCT options should be preserved for SR 520.

- TDM options should be more aggressive to reduce the amount of travel and promote the use of transit, vanpools, carpools, as well as education and land-use planning.
- The 8-lane option is excessive unless the GP lane ends at the UW.
- Growth Management Act issues should be integrated in this discussion. I-405, I-90, and SR 520 will make or break the GMA.
- Support was voiced for the smallest footprint including HOV, and leaving the option open for HCT on SR 520.
- TDM and pricing options are high priority, and trip reduction and smart growth can be used at the local level.
- The Executive Committee should give people a choice for driving or riding, recognizing the tremendous growth on both sides of the lake, as well as being responsible to communities that the highway passes through.
- The cost of ROW expansion and mitigation should be separated from the cost and style of transit service. Public perception of the numbers is more understandable if broken down into component parts. Transit funding should also be appropriated for both capital and operating costs.
- Enough data have been given to compare the alternatives.

Jeff Peacock stated that remaining questions include:

1. I-5's ability to handle more general purpose traffic.
2. Whether I-90 center lanes can handle light rail and still leave room for HOV lanes in each direction.
3. More information about interchanges and communities.
4. TDM packages.
5. Further understanding of the SR 520 role in a regional system.

MEETING HANDOUTS

- Agenda

MEETING ATTENDEES

Advisory Committee Members

Present

X Amick Jean

	Andrews	Deborah
	Aschenbach	Hans
	Beltz	Allison
	Culp	Barbara
	Dent	Bob
X	Eades	Bertha
	Gatchet	Dan
X	Gunby	Virginia
X	Hallenbeck	Mark
	Hart	Fred
	Hill	Jim
	Hill	Gregory
	Holman	Linda
X	Hurley	Peter
X	Joneson	Kingsley
X	Leed	Jean
	MacIsaac	Jim
X	Newstrum	Elizabeth
	Odell	Nina
	Ray	Janet
X	Reckers, Jr.	James
X	Resha	John
X	Sheck	Ronald
X	Stelle	Claudia
X	Tate	Bob
	Tochterman	Thomas B.
X	Wasserman	Eugene
	Weed	Mark
	White	Rich
X	White	Roland
	Wyble	John

Other attendees

Philip Grega, Seattle
Maurice Cooper, Madison Park
Dia Salogga, Montlake Community Club

Project Team

Les Rubstello, WSDOT
Rob Fellows, WSDOT
Jeff Peacock, Parametrix
Lorie Parker, CH2M Hill
Anne Sienko, CH2M Hill
Alene Wilson, CH2M Hill
Don Billen, Sound Transit
John Perlic, Parametrix
Doug Hilderbrant, Parametrix
Jane Farquharson, PSTC
Daryl Wendle, Parametrix

Amy Grotefendt, EnviroIssues
Paul Hezel, EnviroIssues

PJH